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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 001119

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [KNNP](#) [MCA](#) [PINS](#) [PARM](#) [CJAN](#) [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [KPAO](#)
SY, LE, AE
SUBJECT: FM SHEIKH ABDULLAH ON SYRIA, IRAQ, FOREIGN
FIGHTERS, AND LEBANON

REF: A. SECSTATE 92339 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. ABU DHABI 804
[1](#)C. COMUSNAVCENT 260813ZJUN07 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY. Ambassador met with Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah (AbZ) on July 2 to urge UAEG measures to stem the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq and to persuade the Syrian government to do more on this matter. AbZ undertook to engage Bashar al Assad on taking action against the travel of individuals to Iraq to join terrorist or insurgent groups. AbZ informed Ambassador that he would accompany UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed to Damascus for an official visit July 15-16. The conversation also touched on Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine/Israel, Iran, and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. END SUMMARY.

Foreign Fighters; Official Trip to Syria

[1](#)2. (S) Ambassador opened the meeting by recalling past conversations with AbZ and his brother, Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, regarding the need to take action against the travel of individuals to Iraq to join terrorist or insurgent groups (Ref A). She highlighted the importance for enhanced domestic intel efforts, immigration service vigilance, travel screening, and regional intel sharing on investigations. AbZ agreed that foreign fighter/suicide bombers represented urgent threats to Iraq's stability and undertook to engage Syrian President Bashar al Assad on this issue.

[1](#)3. (S) AbZ added that he would be accompanying UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed to Damascus on an official visit July 15-16; this would be the first visit by a UAE President to Syria since 1996. Ambassador urged AbZ to outline during the visit the urgency of improved action by the Government of Syria against the influx of foreign fighters into Iraq through Syrian airports. She noted that there were a small number of chokepoints at which the Syrian authorities could, if they wished to do so, screen suspicious individuals and thus stem the influx of foreign fighters through Syria into

Iraq. Ambassador also reviewed the recent USG order barring from entry into the United States those who have worked to undermine the democratically elected Siniora government in Beirut, ratcheting up the pressure on Syria and its allies in Lebanon. Outside interference in Lebanon continued to undermine Lebanon's legitimate government, its democratic institutions, and contributed to politically-motivated violence and intimidation. (Note: Ambassador also delivered Ref A points to Yousef al Otaiba, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed's International Affairs Director on 7/1. Al Otaiba asked whether the same demarche was being delivered in other capitals, stating that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia "needs to hear this message.")

Lebanon--Proposal for a Muslim Force

¶4. (C) AbZ noted his discussions in Paris with Lebanese PM Siniora and his telephone conversation the day earlier with Sa'ad Hariri on the proposal of a Muslim force for Lebanon. Morocco, Tunisia, and the UAE would be candidates for such a force, he said, and he hoped that Saudi Arabia and Egypt would also express interest. The force would need to be a "blue brigade," he opined, under a U.N. mandate -- not UNSCR ¶1701. It would need to be separate from UNIFIL, as well. The level of UAE's participation would have to be reviewed carefully, AbZ admitted, given current UAE Special Forces and Armed Forces commitments in Afghanistan.

Iraqi National Security Advisor al Rubaie's
Visit to Abu Dhabi

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¶5. (S/NF) AbZ confirmed to Ambassador that Iraqi National Security Advisor Muwaffaq al Rubaie had visited Abu Dhabi on June 28 to meet with him and Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed (State Security Director and UAE National Security Advisor). Al Rubaie had briefed AbZ and Hazza (separately) on security developments in Iraq and thanked the UAE for the reconstruction and humanitarian assistance it provides to Iraq through the Red Crescent and other organizations. There was agreement that the Group of Six (UAE, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait) would invite Iraq's security chief to their next meeting, said AbZ. Al Rubaie also agreed to work with the UAEG to identify a location for a new UAE chancery in Baghdad near the Presidency or Foreign Ministry.

Palestinian Issues

¶6. (C) Ambassador noted the UAE's recent statement of support for the choice of Tony Blair as the Quartet Representative. AbZ emphasized his hope that Blair would be able to push forward the Middle East peace process and end the current stalemate. Israel's transfer of \$119 million in taxes to the Palestinians should not be viewed as "a gift," argued AbZ. Israel's decision to freeze transfers after the 2006 elections had played directly into the hands of Hamas, he criticized. Furthermore, jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti "had to be released." AbZ noted that he and his al Nahyan ruling family brothers had conveyed this belief to USG several times in the past. AbZ said he was not optimistic that Israel would make such a move, however.

¶7. (C) Ambassador commented on the lifting of USG financial restrictions on the Palestinian Government, which would enable American business and financial institutions to resume normal ties with the Palestinian Government. The new Palestinian government of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad needed additional support, agreed AbZ.

U.S. Navy Presence in the Gulf

¶18. (S/NF) Drawing on points provided by NAVCENT (Ref C), Ambassador noted recent erroneous Israeli and Iranian media reports speculating that the USS Enterprise would soon join the USS John C. Stennis and USS Nimitz in the Gulf as part of a buildup against Iran. NAVCENT would be engaging with the media in the days ahead and Fifth Fleet Commander Admiral Cosgriff had wanted the UAEG to be aware of the context of any statements made. Ambassador reminded AbZ of the global rhythm and maritime stability mission of U.S. Navy deployments and noted that it was not unusual for any of the forward U.S. fleets, such as the Fifth Fleet, to have one or more Carrier Strike Groups move in or out of the region as the carriers moved around the world in their operational cycles. (Note: This information had been shared the day earlier with Yousef al Otaiba, Director for International Affairs for Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed.) AbZ expressed appreciation for this update.

U.S. Treasury Interest in Reaching out to
Financial Institutions Regarding Iran

¶19. (S) Noting that UAE MinState Finance Khirbash had met with U/S Treasury Stuart Levey on June 29 in Washington, D.C., Ambassador informed AbZ that Khirbash had been provided with a list of international financial institutions with known banking relationships with Iranian entities. The U.S. hoped that the UAE authorities would reach out to the individuals handling Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) and other government funds to encourage them to pressure the international financial institutions they deal with to

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isolate Iran. (Note: The issue of Emirati support to isolate Iran financially through quiet outreach to ADIA and other money managers had last been raised during a May 17 Washington, D.C. meeting involving Treasury Secretary Paulson, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, and AbZ. The list of banks was also shared with Yousef al Otaiba.)

Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT)

¶10. (SBU) Ambassador reviewed the latest round of discussions between the Embassy and the UAE Ministry of Justice on an MLAT and our intention to re-launch MLAT negotiations in mid-October after Ramadan. She noted that the U.S. had well-established MLATs with Egypt and Morocco, but none yet with any Gulf country. AbZ agreed that an MLAT, which would define areas for mutual legal assistance, would be in the interest of both nations.

Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism

¶11. (C) Ambassador reviewed the U.S.) Russia approach on the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, highlighting the Embassy's March and May presentations to MFA senior officials. The June 11-12 meeting of partner nations in Astana had come and gone; did the UAE intend to join? AbZ accepted the background material and Embassy's two diplomatic notes on the initiative, and undertook to provide an official reply soon.

US-UAE "TIFA-Plus" Meeting

¶12. (SBU) Ambassador and AbZ noted the expiration of the U.S.

Trade Promotion Authority, and turned to the June 29 TIFA-Plus meeting held in Washington. The USTR-hosted meeting had been the first formal bilateral trade discussions since the joint decision in March to suspend Free Trade Agreement negotiations. UAE Minister of Economy Sheikha Lubna and Minister of State for Finance Khirbash had expressed interest in a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), shared views on the issue of transshipment of counterfeit IPR goods, and agreed that a digital economy agreement would be a good next step, said AbZ. Ambassador and AbZ agreed that continuing the bilateral economic dialogue was an excellent goal.

Al Jazeera and CENTCOM Media Engagement Team Dubai

¶13. (SBU) The issue of Al Jazeera's use of identifying information linking the CENTCOM Dubai Media Engagement Team's presence to UAE has long been neuralgic for AbZ; he has welcomed the presence of the CENTCOM office as long as UAE was not publicly associated with it. AbZ had telephoned Ambassador on June 20, irate, to protest that Al Jazeera had once again run a background and banner identifying the CENTCOM media team's location in Dubai. Ambassador had explained that there was a standing request that Al Jazeera not associate the CENTCOM team with Dubai or UAE in any way. The June 20 error had been blamed on an Al Jazeera control room miscommunication in Doha. Ambassador informed AbZ that on July 1, an Al Jazeera producer in Doha had put a "Live from Dubai" banner on the screen during a 13-minute interview with CENTCOM Media Team Director Captain Vic Beck. Captain Beck's deputy saw the program as it aired and worked behind the scenes to get the Dubai identification taken off the screen after minute four. AbZ commented that Al Jazeera seemed to wish CENTCOM mischief.

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